The Modernisation Theory of Development and the Challenges of Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

A Decolonial Application

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that in order for Africa to kick-start development, which must include poverty alleviation and job creation, the policy-makers and researchers on the continent must decolonise all the ideas and knowledge which do not privilege an understanding of the African socio-cultural and economic condition. This article deploys insights from the narrative of decoloniality and the coloniality of knowledge in particular, in order to unpack and interrogate the idea of the modernisation theory of development. The article concludes that narratives of development on the continent as contained in the modernisation theory should be realigned with an African epistemology. Such development narrative should be able to envisage that the challenges of poverty and under-development on the continent can only be eradicated by a narrative that is African and based on good governance. The article uses a conceptual research methodology to analyse and critique the negative effects of applying modernisation theory as a policy option in the sub-region.

INTRODUCTION

In comparison with other parts of the world, such as South America and Asia, which experienced the same brutal history of colonialism, sub-Saharan Africa remains desperately poor (Houngnikpo 2006:27). Throughout this article, sub-Saharan Africa

will be referred to simply as Africa. There has been little improvement in the socio-economic outcomes for the majority of its people since political independence was granted to many countries in Africa in the 1960s (Ayittey 2005:46; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012:20). It is evident in the literature that Africa has made tremendous economic progress in recent times, as 10 of the 20 fastest-growing economies in the world are located in Africa (Mills and Herbst 2012:3). In 2013, the majority of African economies grew by about 4% on average, and in sub-Saharan Africa, the figure was around 5%. Although the growth rate is estimated to be around 5.8%, with the outbreak of Ebola in much of West Africa, the growth rate could be lower than expected (ADB 2013:5).

Despite the fact that the 'Africa rising' narrative rings true, even in spite of the insipid growth of the world economy and the fall in commodity prices, economic growth on the continent has not translated into real development for the poorest of the poor (Ukwandu 2014:233). There is further evidence from other developing countries of the world to support the assertion that economic growth does not equate to development (Frank 1987). This narrative was evident in the study conducted by Hewit (1992:76–7), who discovered that between 1960 and 1974, the Brazilian economy grew at a rate of more than 10% per annum, with the poorest 20% of households representing only 2% of the household income, while 10% of the population represented 50% of the national income (World Bank 1984).

The example of Nigeria and Angola further supports this assertion, because despite the billions that these countries have earned from oil and diamond exports, more than 80% of the population continue to survive on less than one dollar a day (Carmody 2011:25). This corroborates the view that economic growth does not necessarily translate into development, even though every society needs economic growth in order for development to become a reality. The kind of development that this article envisages for Africa is one that is all-encompassing and inclusive of all segments of the population (Chilcote 1984; Frank 1987).

Bearing in mind the shortcomings of using economic growth to measure and define development, as explained by Kuznets (1962:40), it is crucial that one incorporates progress in human welfare, such as health, education etc., as key aspects of development. Seers (1977:25) suggested that average income, which is the building block of economic growth measurements and GDP, fails to capture income distribution across households or even the millions of people, especially in developing countries, who are involved in informal economic activities. Sen (1999) held that the main objective of development should be the enhancement of people's capabilities or the opportunities that are available to them.

Chambers (1983:35) is adamant that it is finding solutions to the problems of the poor, alleviation of poverty and creation of employment that should set the agenda for development action. In his approach towards sustainability, he

directed attention to the concept of sustainable rural livelihoods, which can be defined as the secure access to sufficient stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs (Chambers 1983:35). He believed that there are both moral and practical imperatives for making sustainable livelihood security the focus of development action (Chambers 1983:35). Todaro's (1992:38) assertion resonates very well with the poor living conditions of many people in sub-Saharan Africa, as he suggested that 'without sustained and continuous economic progress at the individual as well as societal level, the realisation of human potential would be impossible' (Todaro 1992:38). He was convinced that development in all societies must have at least the following three objectives: "to increase the availability of basic needs; to provide more jobs and education to generate self-esteem; and to expand choice in order to free the individual and nation from dependence" (Todaro 1992:38)

Inherent to the thesis of Todaro (1992:38) is the belief that in order for Africa to be considered developed, it has to solve the problem of unemployment; create more jobs, as well as the fulfilment of basic needs such as water, housing and quality education (Todaro 1992:38). The situation in South Africa, where the treasury is fixated on GDP and inflation targeting, while millions are unemployed and there is a huge shortage of housing, cannot be viewed as development in any shape or form (Ukwandu 2009). The same situation applies to resource-rich African countries such as Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, where the GDP is constantly increasing and economic growth is on the upward swing, while the majority of citizens in these countries are faced with poverty and deprivation. Goulet (cited in Cowen and Shenton 1996:447) agreed that the core values of development must be 'life sustenance: the ability to provide basic human needs; self-esteem; to be a person; and freedom from servitude; to be able to choose'. Hegel (1830 cited in Cowen and Shenton 1996:447) insisted that self-esteem must be the outcome of development, and Fukuyama (1993) concurred that to be able to choose should be one of the cornerstones of development.

The modernisation theory of development was erroneously assumed by some policy- makers as a way that economic growth in Africa automatically translates into improvement in the lives of the poor on the continent (Ukwandu 2014:233). But the reality is different from the dream. It was a Western effort and initiative to solve the crisis of development afflicting the continent. This article argues that Western methodologies, knowledge and values may not necessarily conform to the socio-political milieu of the continent. It believes that the best way to overcome the vicious cycle of economic growth without development is for the policy-makers and experts on the continent to implement policies that are appropriate for the African situation. The argument in this article is expressed from decolonial and African-centred perspectives. Western interventions and efforts do not hold the panacea for Africa's development problems all the time.

For example, the economic growth without development that was witnessed in Nigeria from 2009 till late 2015 was fuelled by the oil boom and construction of infrastructures that had little or no impact on the life of the ordinary citizen.

CONCEPTUALISING MODERNISATION THEORY

It is essential to have a proper understanding of the intellectual roots of the modernisation theory. As a result of the rapid technological and economic development of European societies in the 19th century, enlightenment philosophers proposed that it was modernity and the reformation of the cultural attributes of European societies that served as an elixir for the economic growth and development of their societies (Smith 1982). These intellectuals equated the economic growth and development of European countries to modernity, and this belief subsequently placed European societies at the pinnacle of cultural achievement and social development, and in the process relegated other societies and cultures to lower 'stages' of development (Schech and Haggis 2000). As a result Africans were labeled 'savages', 'barbaric' and 'primitive' (Schech and Haggis 2000; Smith 1982). This narrative implied that other non-Western societies, such as Africa, contained cultural attributes which inhibited economic growth and development (Rostow 1960; Lewis 1954).

This theory received scholarly attention from Weber (1958) and Tonnies (1887) when they differentiated between *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society) as a way of understanding different ways of human integration and interaction, which are occasioned by their cultures (cited in Nisbet 1969:190–2).

Based on the arguments of Weber (1922) and Tonnies (1887), a society then refers to groups held together through anonymous, rule-bound, more transparent formal contracts and universalistic principles. These types of societies are exemplified by European societies, and since these forms of interaction or integration foster development, according to the theorists, this explains the technological advancement and economic progress of European societies (cited in Nisbet 1969:190). In other words, they referred to community as a form of collective life in which people are united through traditions, interpersonal contacts and informal relationships (Weber 1922; Tipps 1973:200).

Implicit in these narratives of Tonnies (1887) and Weber (1922) is the belief that modern society empowers the individual to take actions and decisions that will prosper or protect their interests, and they can then establish structures and means to protect themselves from the vagaries of weather, governments, greed and the selfishness of others (cited in Nisbet 1969:191). While the modern trait and culture frees the individual, the traditional trait is characterised by the community which governs individuals by controlling and influencing their perceptions

of the world, as well as their values, actions and even the way in which they conduct their business (cited in Nisbet 1969:192). This means that this type of modern interaction, which is a byproduct of European culture, contributed immensely to the growth and development of European societies, while the community type of interaction, which is an offshoot of African culture, contributed to the poverty and underdevelopment of the continent.

Much of what we know as modernisation theory is firmly anchored in and traceable to the narratives of social change in society (Giddens 1971:137–138; Tipps 1973:200). One of the well-known postulations on the modernisation theory of development was that made by Rostow (1960) in his book entitled *'The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-Communist Manifesto'*. Rostow identified five stages of economic growth which every nation desiring development should go through in its bid to join the community of industrialised and developed countries of the world in Europe and North America (Rostow 1960). These stages are: Stage 1 Traditional society, Stage 2 Transitional stage (Preconditions for Take-off), Stage 3 Take-off, Stage 4 Drive to maturity, Stage 5 Stage of mass consumption (Rostow 1960).

Rostow (1960) theorised that the reason for poverty and under-development in developing countries was that the European, and indeed Western countries, had travelled a historical path which involved transforming their cultures from traditional to modern ones, which developing countries have not yet done. This means that until developing countries like Africa go through the five stages of economic growth, as outlined in the thesis of Rostow, development will continue to elude them (Rostow 1960). The narrative of Rostow highlighted the views of other intellectuals, such as W. Arthur Lewis (1954) and David C. McClelland (1964), who theorised that it is the cultural values and attributes of developing countries which constitute impediments to development. This means that until the attitudes and values of the West are imitated, development will continue to elude the developing countries of the world (Lewis 1954; McClelland 1964).

In his notable work entitled *"Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations",* Myrdal (1968:93) asserted that culture is an essential variable in enhancing either the modernisation or impoverishment of a society. He posited this because cultures are the transmitters of values which influence entrepreneurial decisions, investment behaviour and attitudes towards business, as well as other things that are related to commerce and industry (Myrdal 1968:93). Myrdal (1968:93) explained this as follows: "the conflict between articulated specific traditional valuations and the modernization ideals can be expressed in terms of the costs to the latter through lost opportunities" (Myrdal 1968:92–93). Lewis (1955:14) concurred with this view when he proposed that culture has a very important role to play in engendering commercial instincts, behaviours and attitudes in an individual, and it has a concomitant effect on society as a whole. Lewis

(1955:14) opined that "economic growth depends on attitudes to work, to wealth, to thrift, to having children, to invention, to strangers, to adventure, and so on, and all these attitudes flow from deep springs in the human mind" (Lewis 1955:14).

The pivotal thrust of modernisation theory is the notion that Western values and practices are the basis for modernising and developing the non-European and developing parts of the world (Rostow 1960; Lewis 1955; Parsons 1937). Modernisation is the term used to describe the transition from the traditional society of the past to the modern society of today, as it is found in the West. This means that many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have to navigate the same development trajectory already pioneered by countries in the developed world, such as Europe and North America, in order to reap the benefits of modernisation and development (Mabogunje 2000:14007).

Mbaku (2004) asserted that modernisation theory is actually the summation of the belief that by introducing modern methods in technology and science, concentrating on agricultural production for trade and exports, and focusing on industrialisation that depends heavily on a mobile and cheap labour force; developing countries will experience rapid economic growth and development, such as that already enjoyed by the developed world (Bonvillain 2001). The proponents of this theory are of the view that the rest of the world needs to imitate the Western model of modernity, progress and development, and then impose it on their societies, in order for growth and development to take place (Rostow 1960; Lewis 1955).

It is important to emphasise the fact that modernisation theory was a very dominant school of thought in development during the 1950s and 1960s, as it was assumed by many in the developed world that the absence of development in the developing countries, especially those in Africa, was embedded in the traditional values of those countries (Rostow 1960). It was also incumbent upon developing countries to adopt the 'modern' ways and 'behaviours' of Western society, which were elaborated on in modernisation theory (Lewis 1955). This narrative was expanded by Talcott Parson's (1967) formulation of five sets of pattern variables, which clearly showed the differences between traditional and modern societies. In these patterns, Parsons argued that the lack of development in developing countries of the world was a consequence of their traditional way of doing things, unlike the modern way and system of developed Western societies, which helped them to engender development (Parsons 1967).

This worldview was further elaborated by Huntington (1971:290; 1968a), who was undoubtedly one of the chief advocates of modernisation theory, offering a clear prism through which development and under-development can be understood, investigated and explained. According to Huntington (1971:285), "the proponents of modernization theory pointed out that the concepts of modernity and tradition were central to post-war modernization theory".

Modernisation theory gained international prominence and popularity after the Second World War, and it evoked the sentiment that the technological, intellectual, cultural and economic progress of the developing countries of the world should be closely followed by the under-developed parts of the world, if they were ever to shift from their traditional way of life and existence to modernity. Huntington (1971:290), one of the main intellectual brains behind the theory, further elaborated on the role of modernisation theory during the transition from tradition to modern societies for those in the under-developed parts of the world: "these categories were, of course, the latest manifestations of a Great Dichotomy between more primitive and more advanced societies which has been a common feature of Western social thought for the past one hundred years" (Huntington 1971:285; 1968a).

What we have learnt from modernisation theory is that it placed emphasis on building of modern infrastructures and edifices in Africa as it was seen as the only way for the "traditional" African societies to modernise. Modernisation theory was adopted during the time of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. Nigeria also copied the basic tenets of the theory in initiating the construction of a big Ajaokuta steel company with the help of the Russians in 1978. Till today, the envisaged steel company in Nigeria remains uncompleted and this is a typical example of a leap into modernity that is not rooted in the African condition. This study is not advocating for a total rejection of Western and European industries in the sub-Saharan African region; what it advocates is a gradual process of knowledge and skill acquisition that would benefit the people on the continent before embarking on giant industrial and technological constructions when the continent does not have the skill base and capacity to sustain and maintain those industries.

THE DECOLONIAL EPISTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

This article takes, as its point of departure, the decolonial perspective, which understands African colonial and apartheid history, and incorporates it when articulating and formulating theories of development on the continent (Ndlovu-Getsheni 2013b:7; Maldonado-Torres 2006:114). Many intellectuals have alluded to the fact that theories and narratives are usually derived from a particular location in the power structures of the world, and that very few people are able to escape the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical and racial hierarchies of the modern/colonial, capitalist/patriarchal world system (Moraga and Anzaldua 1983; Collins 1990; Dussel 1977). The feminist scholar Donna Haraway (1988:580) referred to the concept when she argued that our knowledge is always situated in a particular socio-cultural milieu. Grosfoguel (2011:5) defined this as a "locus of enunciation", which refers to the geo-political and body-political

location of the subject or author. Therefore it is crucial to understand the locus of enunciation of Rostow (1960) when he theorises about the modernisation theory of development.

In much of Western philosophy, the subject or author that speaks or propagates a theory is sometimes hidden, erased and concealed from the analysis of the theories being developed (Grosfoguel 2011:5). This leads to what the Columbian philosopher Santiago Gomez called "point zero", which is the point of view that hides itself as being without a point of view–it conceals its real intentions and the birthmark of the theories that it propagates with a "god-eye-view" (Castro-Gomez 2003). The decolonial epistemic perspective seeks to discover the real intentions and beliefs behind some Western and Eurocentric ideas, such as modernisation theory, which was influential in, and in fact dominated, the African development discourse after independence.

The Peruvian Sociologist Anibal Quijano (2000:535; 2007:170) provided a template which shows that coloniality consists of four strands of thought, namely coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of being and coloniality of nature. This article is employing the concept of coloniality of knowledge to argue that Western and Eurocentric ideas and epistemologies should not be imposed on the African continent, albeit surreptitiously. The author argues that in order for real and meaningful development to take place on the continent, it is necessary to decolonise some of the policies and paradigms which are imported from abroad.

The concept of coloniality of knowledge posits that since Western epistemologies are viewed as the only answer to global and African problems, it is unwise for African knowledge and solutions to problems to be ignored or neglected, when the issues that need to be tackled are located in Africa. Why then should we continue to use European methodologies to solve African problems? This is how Suarex-Krabble (2009:2) explained the perspective of coloniality of knowledge: "To speak of coloniality of Knowledge is to speak of a key aspect of the colonial power matrix and our understanding of the world cannot limit itself to encompass only the occidental scientific renderings" (Suarex-Krabble 2009:2). Quijano (2000:535) elaborated further on the meaning of coloniality of knowledge, when he opined that:

> *"Europe's hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony. This resulted in simultaneous denial of knowledge production to the conquered peoples and repression of traditional modes of knowledge production, on the basis of the superiority/inferiority relationship enforced by the hierarchical structure" (Quijano 2000:535).*

It is important to state that the decolonial perspective is not an essentialist, fundamentalist, anti-European critique per se (Grosfoguel 2011:5). This perspective is deeply rooted in resistance to imperialism, colonialism and all other forms of knowledge that use only Western and Eurocentric models, while dismissing African knowledge as weak and inferior (Ndlovu-Getsheni 2012:80; Ndlovu-Getsheni 2013b:7). The relevance of the coloniality of knowledge narrative is embedded in its assumption that the Western tradition of knowledge is only useful for some countries, especially those in Europe or other Western countries. It is not a useful tool to employ in trying to solve the developmental problems of countries in Africa, which have a brutal history of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and imperialism (Suarex-Krabble 2009:8).

The decolonial perspective is theoretically informed by a narrative that borrows insights and ideas from the colonial and apartheid experience in the case of South Africa, and its locus of enunciation is situated in developing countries (Biko 1978;Chinweizu 1987) It is grounded in resistance to imperialism and colonialism, and it reflects a compendium of ideas from a variety of intellectuals, whose minds and ideas were shaped by colonial difference and the borders of modernity and the empire (Cesaire 1972:84; Fanon 1968b; Mignolo 1995; Wiredu 1996; Grosfoguel 2011:5).

Colonial difference is a term used to refer to countries and societies such as those in sub-Saharan Africa and South America which were on the peripheries of a European Empire, and which were at the receiving end of the darker consequences of modernity, such as the slave trade, colonialism, apartheid, imperialism and neo-imperialism (Mignolo 2000 cited in Ndlovu-Getsheni 2012:80; Ndlovu-Getsheni 2013b:7).

The decolonial perspective takes the brutal effects of these historical legacies on the African consciousness into account, as well as how the opinions of the West have been shaped as a result of their colonial encounters with African people (Mignolo 1995; Wiredu 1996; Grosfoguel 2011:5; Chinweizu 1987). Maldonado-Torres (2011:2) stated that "the decolonial turn does not refer to a single theoretical school, but rather points to a family of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as the fundamental problem in the modern age (as well as post-modern age) and decolonization or decoloniality as a necessary task that remains unfinished". Cabral (1972:84) went further by theorising on the basic building blocks of decolonial thought:

> *"Provincialism? Absolutely not, I am not going to confine myself to some narrow particularism. Nor do I intend to lose myself in a disembodied universalism. There are two ways to lose one self: through walled-in segregation in the particular, or through dissolution into the universal. My idea of the universal is that of a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars, the deepening and coexistence of all particulars" (Cabral 1972:84).*

According to Maldonado, decoloniality refers to the dismantling of power relations and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender and geo-political hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world (Maldonado-Torres 2006:117). Decoloniality is unique, in that it shifts the geography of reason and knowledge from the imperial, Western and Eurocentric narratives from which "the world is described, conceptualized and ranked" (Mignolo 1995:35) to the formerly oppressed and colonised people and countries of the world, as a point of departure through which issues affecting them can be articulated and formulated. The decolonial perspective aims to critique, interrogate, unveil and, if possible, overcome all the racial and class injustices embedded in imperial global designs, and in the process challenges the narrative that European and American epistemologies and methodologies are universal, objective and neutral (Ndlovu-Getsheni 2013b:7).

Maldonado-Torres (2007:242) is of the view that it is important for the sake of clarity that a distinction is made between colonialism and coloniality, as the two terms sometimes overlap:

> *"Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, inter subjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday" (Maldonado-Torres 2007:242).*

The decolonial perspective does not only seek a change in the narratives, arguments and conversations about Africa, but also strives for a change in the contents of the ideas being paraded on the continent, and which are influenced and generated by coloniality. Decoloniality calls for a new way of thinking–a new way of articulating, interrogating and formulating solutions to the problems of the African people. Banazak and Ceja (2010:115) provided more clarification in this regard:

> *"When they use the term 'colonialism' decolonial thinkers are referring to a form of political domination with corresponding institutions; and when they use the term 'coloniality' they are referring to something more important for them, a pattern of comprehensive and deep-reaching power spread*

throughout the world. In other words, colonialism has been one of the historical experiences constitutive of coloniality; but coloniality is not exhausted in colonialism, as it includes many other experiences and manifestations, which still operate in the present" (Banazak and Ceja 2010:115).

The decolonial perspective is very distinct and unique because it does not hide its "locus of enunciation" (Grosfoguel 2011:5). The "locus of enunciation" (Ndlovu-Getsheni 2013b:7) does not only refer to the geographical location of an author such as Rostow (1960) in his modernisation theory, which is obviously located in the Global North–it also represents ideological orientation and disposition, subject-position (racial, gender, class, religious, political and economic identifications) and the historical, social, cultural and intellectual process that informs and influences knowledge claims (Garuba 2011; Grosfoguel 2011:5; Ndlovu-Getsheni 2012:8; Ndlovu-Getsheni 2013b:70). Mignolo posited that "coloniality names the experiences and views of the world and history of those whom the celebrated French intellectual Frantz Fanon called the *les damnes delaterrr* 'the wretched of the earth' those who have been, and continue to be subjected to the standard of modernity" (cited in Ndlovu-Getsheni 2012:8). He further clarified the meaning of the wretched of the earth as follows:

"The wretched are defined by the colonial wound, and the colonial wound, physically and psychologically is a consequence of racism, the hegemonic discourses that questions the humanity of all those who do not belong to the locus of enunciation (and the geo-politics of knowledge) of those who assign the standard of classification and assign to themselves the right to classify" (cited in Ndlovu-Getsheni 2012:8).

There are those who may argue that decoloniality is irrelevant at this time and age, as the demise of colonial administrations means that African countries should and must be responsible for all that happens on their continent (Ndlovu-Getsheni 2012:73). While the author does not absolve African leaders of culpability in the deleterious economic condition of the majority of the continent's citizens, it is important to emphasise that coloniality is still active and alive on the continent, and as such needs to be properly interrogated (Ukwandu 2014:55). The post-second World War global society is controlled and dominated by the allied powers who won the war, and they made no effort to decolonise the world. Grosfoguel (2007:219) was poignant when he asserted that:

"One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administration amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of a 'postcolonial world'. The heterogeneous

and multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate under the juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same 'colonial power matrix'. With juridical-political decolonization we moved from a period of 'global colonialism' to the current period of 'global coloniality'. Although 'colonial administrations' have been almost entirely eradicated and the majority of the periphery is politically organized into independent states, non-European people are still living under crude European/Euro-American exploitation and domination. The old colonial hierarchies of European versus non-Europeans remain in place and are entangled with the 'international division of labor' and accumulation of capital at a world –scale" (Grosfoguel 2007:219).

A DECOLONIAL CRITIQUE OF MODERNISATION THEORY

As previously mentioned, the author does not absolve African governments of culpability in the poverty and underdevelopment of the continent. It is well documented in the literature that inefficiency, corruption, personal rule and patrimonial rule are all internal factors that can be collectively referred to as poor governance, which is a major obstacle to African economic growth and development (Ukwandu 2014:55). What this article attempts to do is to sensitise researchers and intellectuals to the possibility of wholesale implementation of non-African theories as one of the reasons for lack of development on the continent. This perspective holds that Western hegemonies, cosmologies, methodologies and coloniality of knowledge may form part of the external reasons for the stunted growth that Africa has continued to experience since independence. For example, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) prescribed structural adjustment policies stunted economic growth and development in the sub-region.

In trying to interrogate the modernisation theory of development and clarify its relevance or irrelevance in solving Africa's twin evil of poverty and underdevelopment, this article will draw inspiration and insights from the decolonial perspective. This is because one of the most pressing problems of the modern age is the imitation of Western thoughts and views, without questioning whether or not they will fit into Africa's socio-economic milieu. Modernisation theory itself and those who advocate it have been afflicted by what Ali Mazuri (1968:82) called 'the self-confidence of ethnocentric achievement'. These theorists have forced analysis and understanding of non-Western countries into what Bendix (1967:323) has termed 'the Procrustes bed of the European experience'.

Pilger (2012) elaborated on this when he pointed out that Western liberalism claims to be non-ideological, but neither left nor right is more perilous and pernicious on developmental issues affecting developing countries like sub-Saharan

Africa. Harvey (2005) bemoaned the European and American mission of universalising their own ideas, knowledge, solutions, and values, and even imposing them on developing countries.

First, there are no universal definitions of development and it is preposterous to assume that people in Africa want to have the same lifestyle and values enjoyed by the people in Europe and America, which was Rostow's "locus of enunciation" (Grosfoguel 2007: 219). For to believe that concepts of development is universal is to imply that what is construed as development for a community in New York is the same for a community such as Alexandra Township in South Africa, is too far-fetched. In the case of a community in Alexandra, their own version or vision of development may be decent housing, food, health care and a job, while for an American sitting in a coffee bar in New York; their own idea of development may be the protection of animal rights and climate change. The French intellectual Foucault (1970) emphasised this point when he posited that development is subjectively and discursively constructed.

Second, Rostow's narratives supposed that all non-Western societies are traditional and undeveloped because they do not follow or have not acted out their development script according to Western and European concepts of development (Rostow 1960). With the recent financial crisis of 2007 and the slow pace of recovery in European economies from the economic recession and meltdown, the pertinent question becomes the following: is the Western and European model of development the best and only alternative to development in the world? The answer is no. There are alternative narratives, ideas and methodologies, as evidenced by the rise of the Asian tigers and China. It is unfathomable for Africa to adopt and follow European and Western developmental models, as prescribed by Rostow, as our histories and societies differ tremendously. African countries cannot simply emulate European values in order to catch up with the West. A leading voice on African development and under-development, Thandika Mkandawire (2011:13) bemoaned this narrative of 'catching up'. This is how he explained it:

> *"The idea of 'catching up' entails learning not only about the ideas from abroad but also about one's capacities and weaknesses. 'Catching up' requires that countries know themselves and their own history that has set the 'initial conditions' for any future progress. They need a deep understanding of their culture not only for self-reaffirmation, but in order to capture the strong points of their culture and institutions that will see their societies through rapid social change.. The real issue about 'catching up' is not only that of simply taking on every wretched instrument used by their pioneers to get what they have. Wars, slave labor, child labor, colonialism, Gulags, concentration camps- but of finding more efficacious and morally acceptable ways*

> *of improving the life chances of millions of poor people… There would be no point in investing so much in the study of history if it involved simply regurgitating scripts that countries must follow" (Mkandawire 2011:13).*

The solution to the myriads of development problems afflicting Africa can only come from within the minds of African intellectuals and policy-makers. Real and meaningful national and continental liberation and development will germinate in the shores of the continent and it is only when Africans water the seeds of indigenous knowledge that African solutions to African problems could be realised. The first President of The Republic of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah (cited in Oppong 2013:35) articulated this view as follows:

> *"We must seek an African view to the problems of Africa. This does not mean that Western techniques and methods are not applicable to Africa. It does mean, however, that in Ghana we must look at every problem from the African point of view… our whole educational system must be geared to producing a scientifically-technically minded people… I believe that one of the most important services which Ghana can perform for Africa is to devise a system of education based at its University level on concrete studies of the problems of the tropical world. The University will be the co-coordinating body for education research. Only with a population so educated can we hope to face the tremendous problems which confront any country attempting to raise the standard of life in a tropical zone" (Nkrumah cited in Oppong 2013:35).*

Third, the aspect of modernisation theory as espoused by Rostow privileges a top-down approach to development, which is in keeping with the condescending manner in which European colonialism and apartheid has treated everything that is African. A top-down approach views all local knowledge and epistemologies as being irrelevant and useless. However, as Nkrumah questioned earlier, how do we solve African problems without African solutions? (Nkrumah cited in Oppong 2013:35). We cannot simply regurgitate Western values and solutions and impose them on our society, as this will not succeed (Mkandawire 2011:13).

Oppong (2013:35) elaborated further when he argued that since Western and European narratives of development, such as that espoused by Rostow, exist to denigrate and isolate indigenous African knowledge, the onus is on African policy-makers, intellectuals and researchers to disseminate local knowledge of the continent, since these are the only effective tools for the liberation and development of Africa. This is because indigenous knowledge is unique and sacrosanct to a society, and it should be its template for the development of policies. The World Bank (1998) posited the following:

> *"Indigenous knowledge is unique to a particular culture and society. It is the basics for local decision –making in agriculture health, natural resources management and other activities. Indigenous knowledge is embedded in community practices institutions, relationships and rituals. It is essentially a tacit knowledge that is not easily codified" (World Bank 1998:1).*

The modernisation theory was premised on flawed assumptions that were Eurocentric, Western, and which caused the post-colonial African leaders to neglect or even appropriate the bureaucracy in their countries, while not recognising its crucial role in growth and development in other parts of the world (Mabogunje 2000:14009). These can be seen as nepotism and favouritism which influences appointments/employments into the civil service of most African states. There are certain infrastructures which every state must provide, in order for development to be achieved in its country, such as roads, ports, airports, railways, electricity, water and telecommunications, as well as a well-educated and skilled labour force (Heleta 2007).

It is no coincidence that political leaders in Africa neglected institutional bottlenecks that would have helped to reduce the costs of doing business, alleviate poverty and create employment in their countries, in favour of building dams, bridges and steel mines, which they could not maintain. This was as a result of their misplaced belief in the efficacy of the modernisation theory. Therefore, it seems that because many countries in Africa lacked the technical and technological wherewithal to properly manage these complexities in their industries, modernisation theory was bound to fail in Africa. According to Friedman (1962), economic freedom went hand-in-hand with economic development, and this lack of economic freedom as a result of poor governance in Africa retarded the continent's growth and development.

Modernisation theory as an idea was culturally laden, and its main thesis was premised on the idea that once African countries acquired capital and learned the technology and cultural attributes of the developed West, development would then take place (Carden and Hall 2010:50). The main thrust of modernisation theory was based on the assumption that acquiring the values, attitudes, behaviours, capital and technologies of the developed world was the road to economic growth and development (Lewis 1954:145).

The deleterious impact of modernisation theory on African socio-economic development was that it led to over-concentration of power in the hands of the state, and created opportunities for corrupt civil servants to acquire wealth through control over the granting of various state licenses for the importation of technologies etc. According to Rasheed (1996:116), "the states and their overextended control over economic matters, the imposition of extensive regulations and controls and the exclusive and arbitrary licensing and approval powers with

which public officials are invested in such situations have created ample opportunities for the abuse of office for personal gain" (Rasheed 1996:116).

There is an overwhelming consensus in the development literature that good governance is paramount for any country that desires to stimulate economic development, alleviate poverty and create jobs (Sandbrook 1985:33–34; Friedman 2006: 398). It is important to be aware of the fact that in order for African countries to alleviate poverty and under-development, states must create an environment that includes the following: security of property, political stability, social harmony, and a respected legal code that protects the rights of the owners (Sandbrook 1985:33–34; Friedman 2006:138). These structures must also respect the socio-cultural milieu of the African country which the policy is built upon. This is the main goal of decoloniality.

Western knowledge and epistemology believed (though erroneously) that modernisation theory was the result of a gradually deepening perception of the obstacles in the way of rapid growth in the former colonies of Africa, and that new ways had to be found to tackle those obstacles which inhibited growth and production in traditional societies (Leys 1995:110). Among the proponents of modernisation theory, some considered a shortage of human capital in the form of an educated workforce, and physical capital in the form of machines, equipment and buildings, as the only stumbling block to the reduction of poverty and under-development in the developing countries of the world (Millikan and Rostow 1957). It is unfathomable how development can be equated with machines and technology, instead of seeking new ways of improving human welfare and enhancing the opportunities of poor and vulnerable members of the population. This dissonance between idea and reality in modernisation theory, which did not conform to the socio-cultural milieu of the continent, created a lacuna for most of the political leaders to neglect the role of good governance in development, and centralised all decision-making processes in the presidency. As a result, African countries were characterised by personal and patrimonial rule and its concomitant effects, namely poor governance, poverty and under-development.

Modernisation theory helped to consolidate personal rule and state weakness in Africa, as economic decisions were based on the personal interests of rulers and their close allies, and not on the country's best interests (Young 1988). Many writers in the field of African politics and development believed that personalisation of state resources by those in power continues to act as an impediment to growth and development in Africa, and if Africa is to witness a new dawn in terms of its development, there has to be good governance in the African polity (Zolberg 1966; Hyden 1983; Sandbrook 1985).

It is clear that the reason why African leaders adopted this highly centralised and Western idea, which is not tailored to African conditions, was because it helped to guarantee their hold on power, and modernisation theory inspired

them to rule unencumbered by parliamentary or judicial oversights (Mabogunje 2000:14008). African political leaders did not adopt this theory because of its validity or efficacy, but rather because it helped them to centralise decision-making and assuaged their hunger for power and state resources (Young 1988).

This decolonial perspective inspires policy-makers, researchers and intellectuals in Africa to take a detour from pursuing dead-end polices that will not enhance growth and development on the continent. It is fruitless for Africans to continue to kowtow to every knowledge and insight dished out to it from Europe and North America. It is time for policy=makers on the continent to rethink and re-evaluate their policies. Wallerstein (1991:3) highlighted the need for academics, researchers and policy-makers to sometimes "unthink" some of their assumptions and postulations, in view of the rapid changes occurring in the world. In his view, unthinking the basic fundamentals of our ideologies is vital in an ever-changing world. He explained this as follows:

> *"It is quite normal for scholars and scientists to rethink issues. When important new evidence undermines old theories and predictions do not hold, we are pressed to rethink our premises. In that sense, much of nineteenth-century social science, in the form of specific hypotheses, is constantly being rethought. But in addition to rethinking, which is 'normal', I believe we need to 'unthink' nineteenth-century social science, because many of its presumptions-which, in my view, are misleading and constrictive-still, have far too strong a hold on our mentalities. These presumptions, once considered liberating of the spirit, serve today as a central intellectual barrier to useful analysis of the social world" (Wallerstein 1991:3).*

The advice of Wallerstein (1991:3) is a clever riposte to many policy-makers and academics in sub-Saharan Africa who are trapped in a cycle of regurgitating and reproducing Eurocentric and American-based economic paradigms and policies in their countries. Claude Ake (1979:125), referred to the view of Wallerstein in his book entitled 'Social Science as Imperialism: The Theory of Political Development' and he praised it for its authenticity and originality. The main thrust of this book is the argument that Africans should overturn the dominance of Euro-American knowledge as the god-eye view on issues pertaining to Africa. In Ake's view (1979:125) "teleological thinking" is implicit in Western social science (Ake 1979:125), and many European intellectuals and academics, such as Rostow and Lewis, viewed developing countries, like the majority in sub-Saharan Africa, as 'moving from a less desirable state of being to a more desirable one'. This was the reason why Ake (1979:125) regarded the current social sciences and knowledge that influence and dominate policies in Africa as a sort of 'imperialism'.

CONCLUSION

It has to be emphasised that the author is not advocating for policy-makers on the continent to go back to the institutions which existed in pre-colonial Africa in order to solve the problems of this century. Rather, the author is calling for a results-oriented and pragmatic approach to the issues of poverty alleviation, unemployment and under-development in Africa. Guest's (2004:23) admonition regarding a change of policy and direction for the continent is very timely. According to him:

> *"When Japan's rulers decided in the nineteenth- century, that they had to modernise to avoid being colonised they sent their brightest officials to Germany, Britain and America to find out how industrial societies worked. They then copied the ideas that seemed most useful, rejected the Western habits that seemed unhelpful or distasteful, and within a few decades Japan advanced enough to win a war with Russia—the first non-White nation to defeat an European power in modern times.*

Japan's example should be important for Africa, because it shows that modernisation or development need not mean Westernisation. Developing countries need to learn from developed ones, but they do not have to abandon their culture and traditions in the process. Africans face the same challenge now that Japan faced in the nineteenth century: how to harness other people's ideas and technology to help them build the kind of society that Africans want" (Guest 2004:23).

The panacea for the myriads of developmental problems affecting the continent lies in good governance, which remains the only compass for this journey. In recognition of the role of good governance in development, Weber (1965a:155) called for those in poor and developing countries who wish to reduce poverty and under-development to concentrate on activities that promote commerce, and not to rely on magic, luck or alien theories, as development is a result of effective policies. This is how Weber explained it:

> *"That principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom mysterious powers existed, technical means and calculations perform the service" (Weber 1965a:155).*

In Weber's view, Africa should and must keep up with the technological and scientific age and adopt a more effective policy, in order to speed up the process of development. The *Holy Grail* to development on the continent remains

governance. According to the Asian Development Bank (1999), 'governance means the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development'. The author can infer from this definition that national governments and policy-makers on the continent should play a vital role in terms of mapping out rules and regulations, ensuring the rule of law and in the mobilisation of both the private and public sector in the quest for development. This is the only way in which poverty has been reduced and jobs created in other parts of the world. African governments need to know that the institutional environment existing in a particular socio-cultural milieu is important for development, because it determines the impact achieved by the many economic programmes initiated by the national government.

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